

FALL 2006

NEWS AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE PAMS PROJECT
New Jersey Division of Taxation

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What is PAMS?

PAMS is a web-based system that will replace the outdated MOD IV system, and will provide improved tools for performing property assessment and tax collection processes.

Team Cleans Up Assessment Data to Pave the Way for Conversion to PAMS

After more than 20 years on the MOD IV system, assessors have developed various ways of working with the system, including using different fields for different purposes. During a system conversion, the new system needs to know where to look to find information in the old system. If it doesn't find what it expects in a data field, the result can be, well, untidy.

To help prepare for the move to PAMS, Taxation created a Municipal Conversion Team (MCT). This team began working with municipalities two years ago to review and standardize how data is stored. To date, the team has completed two reviews of the three early implementation counties: Camden, Hunterdon, and Salem. In addition, the team completed cleanup in nine other counties: Atlantic, Burlington, Cape May, Essex, Gloucester, Hudson, Mercer, Somerset, and Union.

During cleanup, the MCT scrubs the MOD IV master file by reviewing data, interviewing assessors, and doing data entry and cleanup on site. There are five components of the cleanup:

1. **Remove information** that shouldn't be in the file. For example, the team may work with the current assessor to delete information entered by a previous assessor that is no longer needed, such as telephone numbers or demolition dates. Also, the file may still contain information from obsolete regulations or statutes.
2. **Enter missing information** such as tax map pages, zoning information, etc. to make the file more complete.
3. **Ensure consistency.** For example, an assessor may have common elements for condominiums in different fields within the system. The MCT moves the data to one field and



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Local Property Tax staffer Mark Gesualdi supervises the MCT. In the photo he joins team member Kimberly Dowd. Members not shown: Nichole Carthan, Tiffany Fields, Inga Mule, Janelle Raines, Shelly Reilly and Veronica Rucker.

TESTING: Making Sure PAMS Works As Planned

In the midst of the anticipation of new tools and greater access to information, assessors, collectors, and tax administrators have one persistent question. Will PAMS work the way it's supposed to?

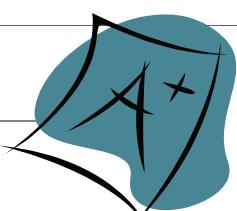
To help deliver on the promise, the PAMS project team will follow a detailed and comprehensive test plan. Testing will assure the State of New Jersey that the software works as specified in the Functional Requirements Grid and business requirements documents, and that PAMS will be a successful replacement of the MOD IV system and its associated modules.

The testing plan includes many types of tests through many steps in the project. There are six major types of testing:

- Unit:** Business analysts test each modification made to the software. During this test they create data to match every option that could occur

in a process, and then perform all steps of the procedure using each different option.

- Integration:** After each modification is tested, integration testing ensures that links between modules function properly. For example, agricultural use data will be written to a table that feeds values into assessment. Testing will follow the changes through a function to make sure all steps are intact.
- System & Predictive:** Some functions in PAMS will be more heavily used than others, and this testing will ensure that the system can exceed the expected limits of use. For example, posting owner and sales information from the SR-1A will be tested by having many users post at the same time.
- Network & Performance:** To measure peak memory usage, network performance, database connections, and other system-wide performance, automated



testing tools will measure and check how well the system is functioning.

- Conversion:** Conversion tests will compare both detail and summary data, looking for data that does not fit normal patterns.
- Acceptance:** This is a comprehensive test for reviewing all aspects of PAMS. Users will follow a "use case scenario" for a function, such as an ownership change, a rollback of agricultural values, etc.

During acceptance testing in 2007, the project team will simulate two complete annual cycles of the appraisal, assessment, tax extract, and collection business processes.

Watch for more information in 2007 related to testing.

Cleanup Team (continued from page one)

- recommends to the assessor that he or she continue to put the information in that field. Even if the field is not intended to be used that way, using one field for the same type of data will allow PAMS to retrieve the correct information during conversion.

- Verify that additional lots are not duplicates.**
- Review exempt properties** for correct EPL codes. It is not unusual for the exempt property detail to be out of date since the state changed codes.

During a visit to the assessor's office, the MCT member reviews all line items by property class. The MCT advises assessors to be consistent in how they enter or change data, and offers three recommendations:

- Follow guidelines set up during cleanup.
- Be consistent.
- Know where your data is.

Assessors continue to be responsible for and retain control over their data. The MCT, in conjunction with the Municipal Liaison Team (MLT) are working to make a smooth transition to PAMS.

Reduce Duplicated Efforts: Multi-Year Processing and a Single Database

One of the major changes PAMS will bring is the ability to store an unlimited number of tax years in the system. For the local assessor, collector, or tax administrator, this means being able to look at information such as additions, changes, appeals, or judgments from one source — the online database.

If a property owner visits the assessor today and asks for information about a previous assessment, the assessor typically goes to the assessor's field book; however, he or she may need to check the added-omitted book, the appeal file, or a CAMA record to see the whole picture of a property's assessment history.

As information is converted and continues to be added to PAMS, the assessor will have access, not only to previous years, but to changes that were made within the year. Instead of displaying only the most recent change, PAMS will keep each version of the record, saving all changes and the name of the staff member who made them.

In addition to the ability to store data about the parcel by tax year, PAMS will track any changes made to the parcel **within** a given tax year. The changes within the year are stored in versions. For example, if a grade on the house is changed from Average to Good, a PAMS user can see when the change was made and by whom.

Another reason to use versions is when the exact "state" of the parcel must be stored, such as when the assessment notice is produced. The assessment notice report will "version" the parcel, so a user at a

future time can look at an exact copy of the parcel at the time the report was created. This means no more guessing about how the value on the notice was produced. The good thing about versions is that the user does nothing special to create them; PAMS does it automatically.

PAMS will allow each office—tax administrator, collector, and assessor—to work independently according to their own work calendar, and yet will assist in coordinating information between offices: integrated, yet independent.

An integrated system such as PAMS will allow the assessor to store an unlimited number of years of data, and will also allow data for future years to be entered at any time as far

into the future as desired. The information will be there waiting when the tax year is set or becomes active. This is useful for data such as amortized special assessments where several years of data can be keyed in when created. The user will be able to perform an online query of the future data.

All of this is a new way of thinking compared with the MOD IV system. The important thing for users to remember is that PAMS is designed to store information in the appropriate locations so that assessors, collectors, and tax administrators will have access to the right information at the right time.

Users from early implementation counties will learn about the system and will have the opportunity to practice during training classes in 2007.

Choose to view the current record or see past versions.

The screenshot shows a software application window titled 'Parcel History' with a toolbar at the top containing icons for file operations like Open, Save, Print, and XML export, along with 'Quick Links' and other buttons. Below the toolbar is a table titled 'Parcel History' with columns: 'Who', 'When', and 'Record'. The table lists several entries:

Who	When	Record
J ROGERS	17-AUG-2006	Current
T MILLER	25-JUL-2006	History
EOY ROLL	29-DEC-2004	History
T MILLER	25-JUL-2006	History
T MILLER	17-AUG-2006	History
J ROGERS	17-AUG-2006	History
T MILLER	17-AUG-2006	History
T MILLER	17-AUG-2006	History
T MILLER	17-AUG-2006	History
J ROGERS	17-AUG-2006	History

Below the table is a section titled 'FILING FEES' with fields for 'Amount due:' (25), 'Amount paid:' (empty), and 'Date received:' (empty). There is also a 'Comments' field at the bottom.

New Jersey Division of Taxation

If you would like more information about PAMS, please contact Dana Max Supervisor, Information Services (609) 292-8311 or Dana.Max@treas.state.nj.us

**PAMS Phases**

Gap Analysis	July 05—Oct 05
Development	Oct 05—Dec 06
Conversion	Oct 05—Aug 07
Acceptance Testing	Dec 06—May 07
User Training	May 07—Oct 07
Cutover	Oct 07—Dec 07

Did you miss past issues of the PAMS “Update” newsletter?

Go to <http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation>

Click on PAMS and “Info & Links.”

Q: What's the difference between the MLT and the MCT?

A: Assessors, collectors, and county tax administrators will receive support from both the Municipal Liaison Team (MLT) and the Municipal Conversion Team (MCT), but with a different focus from each team. The MLT is tasked with supporting change activities through communication and user support. They are a jurisdiction's point of contact for all questions and concerns.

The MCT has been working on MOD IV cleanup for two years and will provide support during PAMS conversion activities. They will contact jurisdictions to schedule appointments for cleanup and data analysis.



Members of the Municipal Liaison Team (MLT) attended a PAMS orientation session in September. Front row: Jim LeBlon, Melissa Gorman, Christina Jordan. Back row: Betty Ashton, Janelle Raines, and Tyler team member Mary Sue Gmeiner.